1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

OLD FORT

787 Nuttn ebuh happen tuh me widout me knowin it long fo it come." [22a, •]

301 Another old woman • can recall when her slave mother
•75 used to carry her on her back to the spring on their plantation. This woman wears large earrings of gold which she
(115) has worn since her mother pierced her ears in childhood. Each wrist is encircled by a band of copper wire. She smiled and inadvertently touched the wire as she explained its presence.

"Ef yuh wuks hahd aw does much washin, it heps duh nerbes." [8, 13]

754 At the mention of "cunjuh" the old woman lit her pipe, smiled pathetically, and shook her head. As the blue smoke curled upward, she told of having been conjured and of how it had changed her whole life in a few short weeks.

"Yeahs ago," she sighed, "I hab a huzbun wut treat me well an uh wuz libin good. Dis wuz jis fo muh twins wuz
(845) bawn. Ise a twin too, an it sho is bad luck.[67] Deah wuz somebody wut want muh huzbun tuh leab me an go off wid um, so dey hab me fix.[15] Wen uh come home one day, I step in a hole by duh doe an deah wuz a bottle fix wid some tings in it. Right den an deah I took sech a misery in muh lef side an den uh swell up all obuh; muh hands wuz twice deah size.[8, 12, 15] I stay dataway till I fine out wut tuh do. Den I sprinkle black peppuh an potash in duh hole weah duh bottle wuz an it bile up. Den some friens wash me off in wiskey ebry day an soon uh wuz all right.[6] But wen duh twins wuz bawn duh boy twin hab a lill hole right in is lef side weah I hab duh misery frum duh fixin. He lib nine days fo he die."

"But the person did not succeed in getting your husband after all, did she?" we asked.

"Yes'm but she sho did. Whoebuh fix me fix muh huzbun too, cuz he go off an leab me an I know he ain nebuh done dat lessn he bin fix. Muh son die wen he wuz twenty-tree an

• *Dye Williams, Old Fort.*

12 elements of their cultural heritage? On a broader level,
178 Africanisms have been clearly cited in the music and dancing patterns of mainland Blacks. Likewise the gospel music of the Sea Islands is viewed as highly permeated with African cultural entities. In the same vein, the African features of Sea Island religious beliefs and ceremonies are well established. The African features in the dancing patterns of Sea Islanders has been noted also.

12 The survival of African Cultural traits in the family
178 structuring and in the child rearing habits and beliefs of
855 Sea Islanders has not been carefully researched. Data of this sort is disjointed, and comes primarily as an indirect contribution of the numerous collection of Sea Island folklores. This literature does note some child rearing features which are common to Sea Islanders and to Blacks elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere who are of West African heritage. The following are examples of these commonly held beliefs:

(845) A child born with a face caul is able to see
(789) supernatural forces and is able to see visions of ancestors.

(789) Charms, necklaces, bracelelets have the power
(751) to protect against supernatural affliction and to ward off disease.

(754) The hair and nails of people can be used in "conja" to bring harm. Consequently the parent warns the child not to have strangers comb hair or to cut nails. Parent may also instruct child to destroy residue hair and nails.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
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St. Simon's Island

that was distinctive. He taught his wife Milly (Illustration 34A) how to make "goof bags." Apparently his magic was no more potent than Gullah Jack's when it came to protecting himself. Gullah Jack was executed in Charleston for his part in the uprising of 1822; and when Jim Polecat was old, decrepit, and a nuisance, his own children pushed him into the fireplace, and burned him to ashes. Milly must have been a peculiar character. She would turn her back on you when she had anything to say. When her cabin was built she insisted on having no windows—a good African mode of construction. She said: "Door's enough to watch." When urged to have them for ventilation, she insisted that "Chimney gives enough air." There were no windows put in. The walls of her cabin were lined with boxes and trunks that had belonged to her children, all of whom were dead or in the penitentiary. It is no wonder she was moody, and that the other Negroes were afraid of her. They might well be, for—in addition to being looked upon as a witch—she was the mother of seven murderers.

In every Negro settlement there are usually frizzled chickens.[21] These curious-looking birds are supposed to be on the watch for goof bags or any "sleight-o'-hand" buried under doorsteps. Josephine tells me that she always keeps one around for such a purpose. If the chicken "come clean" (loses its feathers), it is a sure proof that it has scratched up something intended for its owner's bad luck. So much for black magic. You hear little about it, but the belief in its efficacy turns up every now and then when least expected.

At the risk of being tiresome, it may be well to call attention to various obscure customs among the Negroes that could easily be passed over as idiosyncrasies. From the pulpit of the Jewtown African Baptist Church I heard Parson Joe Lowman say with a weak voice that he was feelin' very po'ly and in no condition to preach a Christmas sermon, but by the grace of God he would do his best. I was astonished to find, as he warmed to his subject, "The Christ Child and the Three Wise Men," that his voice grew stronger and stronger. When his sermon was finished, I realized that I would never hear a better one, and that he had either received supernatural aid or was a consummate artist—perhaps both. Later, I read an article by Morton C. Kahn, on "Adventures in Medical Research among Two Strange Tribes of Dutch Guiana," [22] in which the author described the greeting employed by the Bush Negroes, the translation of which runs somewhat as follows: "Howdy, white man.

[21] Captain R. S. Rattray tells us such freakish birds are called asense chickens in Ashanti.
[22] "Where Black Man Meets Red." Natural History, May, 1936.

A. [For Illustration 34, see Category 754, plate facing p. 225--Analyst]

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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Georgia
St. Simon's Island

How are you, brother?" The reply is: "So-so, Granman. How are you, brother?" The writer explains that "It does not do to claim that one is feeling too well, otherwise the enmity of the spirits might be incurred." From this it can be seen why there was a wide divergence between Lowman's words and his performance, and also why our older Negroes always appear to enjoy poor health.

Another tradition caused me to be embarrassed for the poor preacher, who seemed to have a strange affliction. I furtively looked around to see how the younger members of the congregation were taking the curious performance. Their matter-of-course attitude should have made me less innocent. However, it was not until I heard other preachers give the same effect—the mewing of a harassed cat combined with the bark of a half-strangled dog—that I realized my ludicrous mistake. At the peak of the preacher's harangue the words pour out so fast that he has no time to get his breath, and his gasping efforts cause the outrageous sounds that appear to have no name with us, but which are described by Martha Beckwith, in *Black Roadways*, under the name of "trooping." [23] She believes that the exercise, "if persisted in, will produce that semiconscious condition so favorable to the communication of spirits." But it has always seemed to me that religious ecstasy is itself the source of the strange manifestation. When the preacher has reached his rhythmical best; when an insistent tapping of toes on the floor provides an under-current of sound along with a feeling of uncanny suspense; when the "moaning" (as the peculiarly beautiful humming of the Negroes is called) takes on an elemental quality that comes from everywhere and from nowhere in particular—then the snapping point is reached for someone, and you hear a piercing shriek. A woman stands up with stark, stiff arms stretched high above her head. If she makes much of a commotion she is supported into the open air to recover. When I was a little child I saw a woman who had gone into this rigid state carried to a pump beside the church, where, under the spout, she was quickly brought to her senses. In the House of Prayer in Savannah (where the pillars are thickly padded, and the sawdust is inches deep on the floor) I saw a "lone shouter" fall into a trance that lasted half

[23] *It is possible that the tradition was carried to Jamaica by Elder George Lisle, the former slave of Mr. Sharp, a loyalist of Savannah, who gave him his liberty. Lisle preached in Georgia during the Revolution. At the close of the war he went to Jamaica. Though an ex-slave, he organized, in Kingston in 1784, the first Baptist church on the island, and became "the chief human factor in the salvation of Jamaica." (L. G. Jordan, Negro Baptist History in the United States.)*

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
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South Carolina
St. Helena Island

567 164

the village was moved about three-fourths of a mile away to the pine woods and the houses built farther apart.

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Smallpox and yellow fever also caused the planters considerable alarm, although there were more widespread efforts to prevent these infectious diseases than others to which the Negroes were subject. The state quarantine laws greatly reduced the number of cases of yellow fever and the planter's general use of vaccine lessened the epidemics of smallpox. Henry A. Middleton, Jr.'s, Weehaw Plantation Book indicates that he regularly had the black children vaccinated.

567 164

Although sea-island planters usually considered that the winter months were the hardest for the Negroes and the summer months for the whites, the Negroes also suffered from malaria, although not to the same extent as the whites. In 1857 James Hamilton Couper wrote to his son James that the illness of another son was "induced by the same state of the atmosphere which has caused a very general malaria of typhoid fever among the Negroes." For four weeks during this attack there was an average of forty ill in the plantation hospital.[56]

(758) (743)

567 165 764

The death of a trusted slave often brought a deal of sorrow into the planter's family. In recounting the deaths on the plantation in a letter to his son, Couper wrote in 1857:

> To myself personally the most painful loss has been that of poor old Sandy and his wife Joan. . . . I requested Mr. Brown to read the funeral service at his grave; and your mother, myself and the family attended. He was an honest, faithful and good man; and I part with him as with a devoted and tried friend. He was

[56] Couper-Wylly Papers, April 13, 1857.